

## **Fort Riley USDA Office Opens**

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**By Anna Staatz  
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FORT RILEY -- Three-year old Ethan Warren was more concerned with running and jumping in the small open space he saw by the podium than being held in the confines of his mother's arms. But in the end, he got the best job of all, cutting the ribbon on Fort Riley's USDA Rural Development office during opening ceremonies this morning.

Ethan's parents, Shane and Cathryn, were on hand this morning during the ceremonies to represent soldiers and families able to take part in the program which assists them in buying a home. The Warrens recently purchased their first home through the program.

"This is such an exciting day and an exciting opportunity that could not have occurred without the tremendous cooperation on the part of so many people," Chuck Banks, USDA Rural Development Director. "This is a wonderful opportunity for USDA to assist Fort Riley and its soldiers."

Through the program, \$24 million in guaranteed lending assistance through USDA's Rural Housing program will be offered to soldiers and civilian workers and relocating to Fort Riley as part of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process. The program helps soldiers and their families purchase and build homes in rural communities close to Fort Riley. It is estimated that about 100 communities in 11 counties surrounding Fort Riley will serve as homes for relocating soldiers and civilian workers.

"This is a tremendous benefit that brings many resources," said Maj. Gen. Dennis E. Hardy, commanding general of Fort Riley and the 24th Infantry Division, (Mech.) "As we look at doubling the families at Fort Riley from about 12,000 to about 25,000 families of soldiers and civilian support (workers), this program brings major benefits, particularly for first-time home buyers."

The office is located on the second floor of Carr Hall. The office has a staff of two and is backed by the Manhattan USDA office. The office will offer services such as the homeownership pre-qualification process, homebuyer counseling and a review of financing options for those who wish to buy a home, according to a press release from Fort Riley Public Affairs Office.

"Often, as a member of congress, I'm asked to create programs and then create the tax dollars to fund those programs," said Congressman Jerry Moran, R-Kan. "This is an opportunity for me to see the success of those programs. ...

"As a result of the BRAC process, Kansas and Geary County have received the best piece of economic news that has happened in our state in decades, if not in generations," Moran said. "...Most communities would love to be in the position that Fort Riley and the surrounding communities are in today as a result of this Christmas present."

Moran and Hardy noted that the agreement between USDA rural development and Fort Riley, which was signed in June, was a historic agreement; the first time an agreement of its type has ever been signed between two federal agencies.

For additional information on the USDA Rural Development Fort Riley Regional Initiative, call (785) 776-7582 or visit [www.rurdev.usda.gov/ks](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ks).

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